

MINUTES
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission Meeting
FWP Headquarters – 1420 East 6th Avenue - Helena, MT
JANUARY 19, 2012

Commission Members Present: Bob Ream, Chairman (via conference phone); Dan Vermillion, Vice-Chairman; Ron Moody; A.T. Stafne (via AV system); Shane Colton (via AV system).

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Joe Maurier, Director, and FWP Staff.

Guests: See January 19, 2012 Commission file folder for sign-in sheet.

Topics of Discussion:

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Minutes of December 8-9, 2011 Commission Meeting
3. Approval of Commission Expenses through December, 2011
4. Commission Reports
5. Director's Report
6. Repeal Outdated FWP Commission Policies – Proposed
7. Smith River State Park Biennial Rule - Final
8. First People's Buffalo Jump Grazing Lease – Final
9. Budget and Legislative Priorities – Proposed
10. Financial Status of FWP – Informational
11. No Wake Areas at All Commercial Boat Marinas Statewide – Proposed
12. Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena Commercial Fishing Regulations - Proposed
13. 2012 Helena Urban Deer - Final
14. 2012/2013 Peregrine Falconry Take - Proposed
15. Turkey Augmentation in Chouteau County – Endorsement
16. 2012 Bighorn Sheep Transplant – Lewis & Clark Caverns - Informational
17. Wolf Management Harvest - Proposed
18. Bison Management Harvest -Proposed
19. Update on Season Settings – Informational
20. Open Microphone – Public Opportunity to Address Additional FWP Issues

1. **Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance.** Vice-Chairman Vermillion called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **Approval of the Commission Meeting Minutes of December 8-9, 2011.**

Action: Moody moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to approve the December 8-9, 2011 minutes. Motion carried.

3. **Approval of the December Commission Expense Report.**

Action: Moody moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to approve the expense report as presented. Motion carried.

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**Commissioner Vermillion read the FWP Commission Resolution** in honor of David Gaillard, respected wildlife advocate, who was tragically killed in an avalanche near Cooke City in December, 2011. Gaillard was an avid conservation leader who appeared before the Commission many times. He leaves behind his wife, his daughter, his parents, and many friends. His legacy will live on.

*Action: Moody moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to approve the Commission Resolution in honor of Mr. David Gaillard, wildlife advocate, for his dedication to the resources. Motion carried.*

#### 4. Commission Reports.

**Moody** attended two season setting meetings regarding the proposed regulations. A great deal of the discussions focused on elk archery. The Sun River Working Group met in Great Falls to discuss the unique land and wildlife challenges of the Rocky Mountain Front, specific to grizzly bears, elk, and the handling of fires.

**Colton** attended the MOGA convention in Billings, where more than 100 folks participated in lively and productive discussions. The season setting hearing in Billings was reasonably well attended, but other meetings have been poorly attended. More public comment opportunity will be available when quotas are set.

**Stafne** – no report.

**Ream** – no report.

**Vermillion** reported that he has been involved in many discussions regarding the proposed season setting regulations. There are concerns regarding the permit issue in HD313 near Gardiner. He met with Senator Terry Murphy regarding Murphy's opposition to sheep restoration in the Lewis and Clark Caverns area. He attended the WAFWA convention, where they discussed many issues, one of which was wolves and the trapping of them.

**5. Director's Report.** Director Maurier reported that FWP received a letter from the Secretary of the Interior indicating they would provide some money for fencing materials on tribal properties for bison management and containment. These funds, combined with money from NGOs, should be enough to do what is needed. He reported that FWP is going to be sued to stop the location of bison on reservations, however the Department has not been served as of yet, which means there is legally no law suit against FWP. There is nothing FWP or the Court can do at this point. A Brucellosis Working Group for elk has been established. Director Maurier thanked the staff for the successful aquatic invasive species summit. FWP is letting some high cost office space leases go, replacing them with leases that are substantially less cost to the agency. The Legal Unit is moving to a nearby office building, and additional relocation is taking place within the agency to better reposition staff.

Director Maurier explained that resultant from union negotiations, FWP has reviewed the Broadband Pay Plan. The Department researched what other agencies are doing, then formulas were developed and criteria established, and almost everybody in FWP received a raise of some kind. FWP has lost many employees who have gone to other agencies to do the same job at higher pay. FWP budgets 3% every year for cost of living expenses so the money is already set aside - the future is based on the ability to pay.

**6. Repeal Outdated FWP Commission Policies – Proposed.** Paul Sihler, FWP Special Projects, said this is a tentative proposal to repeal obsolete and outdated commission policies. Some go as far back as the 1940s, and some have been replaced by an administrative rule using the same language. The proposed recommendations are as follows.

##### **Obsolete FWP Commission Policies Proposed for Repeal**

###### Land Acquisition (1977)

Purpose: To guide the Commission acquisition of fishing access areas, wildlife habitat, access areas and state parks and recreation areas.

Reason: Outdated and some instances replaced by newer policy/rule (Habitat MT, Block management)

###### Oil and Gas Leasing (1976)

Purpose: To establish a policy of protection of all surface resources essential to the maintenance of fish and wildlife populations affected by leasing, exploration, extraction and transportation of energy resources in Montana.

Reason: Outdated and replaced by ARM 12.5.102

###### Black Bears (1971)

Purpose: Establish guidelines for handling bear hunting and depredation.

Reason: Replaced by ARM 12.9.102

###### Artificial Feeding of Game Animals on Commission-Owned Lands (1969)

Purpose: To establish how artificial feeding of game animals will be done on Commission-Owned lands.

Reason: Replaced by ARM 12.9.104 (which is outdated itself)

###### Big Game Winter Feeding Policy (1985)

Purpose: To avoid feeding big game animals during the winter except in extreme emergencies, and to include contingencies for winter feeding only in management plans in high priority areas in response to special land use circumstances.

Reason: Replaced by ARM 12.9.104 (which is outdated itself)

###### Natural Resource Development (1969)

Reason: Replaced by ARM 12.5.102, which was adopted by the FWP Commission in 1996.

###### Closing Land and Water to Hunting (1969)

Purpose: Require Commission to provide written notification to private landowners and land management agencies when considering closing land or waters to hunting.

Reason: Outdated and obsolete

Allow Director to Declare Seasons (1956)

Purpose: Authorize the director to declare special game damage seasons during 1956 and 1957

Reason: Authority expired

Sheep Permit Policy (1957)

Purpose: To provide unlimited permits for ¾ curl rams in Area 201 and to limit hunters to one permit in the area over a ten year period.

Reason: Obsolete and replaced by current season setting process

Big Game Season – Special Post Season Hunts for Game Damage (1964)

Purpose: Establish guidance and direction for game damage hunts

Reason: Replaced by subsequent legislation over multiple sessions and ARM 12.9.801

Policy on Opening Date for Early Seasons (1965)

Purpose: Set uniform early season opening date (September 15) for 1965 hunting season

Reason: Policy expired with end of 1965 hunting season

Turkey Tags (1966)

Purpose: To clarify that a turkey tag may be used in either the spring or fall turkey season

Reason: Replaced by 87-2-403, MCA and seasons authorized by FWP Commission

Season Opening Dates (multiple years)

Purpose: To set a policy for season opening dates for big game hunting

Reason: Temporal policies that expires whenever a change is made by the Commission through the season-setting process

Development of Plans and Regulations to Address River Conflicts (2000)

Purpose: To provide guidance to the department and to advisory committees who are developing management plans or regulations to address recreational use conflicts on rivers related to Commission authority under 87-1-303(2), MCA

Reason: This policy is superseded by the Statewide River Recreation ARM's adopted in 2004 (see ARM 12.11.401 through 12.11.455).

Flathead Grizzly Bear Policy (1980)

Purpose: Guide department actions related to problem grizzly bears of Flathead Reservation

Reason: Outdated

Allow Season Setting Dissenting Recommendations by Field Staff to be Presented to Commission (1958)

Purpose: Ensure that biologists and wardens alike have input in the season setting process and to attempt to reach agreement at the district level. If agreement can't be reached then dissenting recommendations are forwarded to district supervisor, director and commissioners

Reason: Obsolete and replaced by current season-setting process

**Policies Proposed to be Updated or Modified and Re-adopted**

The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks proposes that the following FWP Commission policies be updated or modified as appropriate and then formally re-adopted by the FWP Commission. The department would work with the Commission to make any needed changes to these policies, reformat them into a current policy template and then go through a public process to formally re-adopt them. We seek to complete this by the summer of 2012.

Habitat Montana (1993)

Purpose: To establish the policy of the FWP Commission for the acquisition of wildlife habitat by the department, the stewardship of fish, wildlife, park and recreational resources while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations and to establish a statewide wildlife habitat system. Statutorily required policy that was adopted in ARM but the plan is still relevant

Land Lease-Out Policy (1994)

Purpose: Ensure a sound decision-making process regarding the use of department lands and to provide guidance and direction in the lease-out of these properties. This is a Joint Commission-Department policy as a result of shared authority and responsibility.

Appeals Procedure for FAS and Park Development (1995)

Purpose: To establish procedures that provide opportunity for the public to appeal decisions made by the department to develop sites, encourage the public to participate at the beginning of the decision-making process and resolve appeals at the lowest level possible.

Reimbursement on Expense Account for Donations to Private Groups (1986)

Purpose: To clarify that it is illegal for Commissioners to be reimbursed by the state for donations made to non-profit organizations. (This is a legal memo not a policy.)

Walleye Stocking (1989)

Purpose: Establish policy on the introduction of walleye beyond their existing range in Montana. This is still relevant and necessary.

State sovereignty, scientific management, cooperation and citizen participation (1941)

Purpose: This appears to be the seminal policy reflecting the shift from the law enforcement dominated era of fish and wildlife management to the scientific management dominated era. The policy is outdated in many of its specifics but most of the underpinnings ring true today such as science-based management decisions, cooperation across administrative jurisdictions and public participation.

Road Management Policy (1982)

Purpose: Maintain current hunting opportunity for elk in forested areas of Montana as other resources are developed.

- Develop a uniform approach to within the department for road management issues.
- Provide guidelines for department staff to coordinate with land managers involved with road management.
- Establish proposed road density levels, closure to motorized public use for elk calving areas and nursery areas and closures of winter ranges to motorized vehicles

*Action: Moody moved and Colton seconded the motion to adopt the Department's proposal to repeal and/or modify the policies identified above. Motion carried.*

**7. Smith River State Park Biennial Rule – Final.** The rule adopted in November, 2011 reads as follows:

*Outfitters would have the ability to freely move launch dates up to 7 days prior to the private lottery drawing. All launches on the calendar not occupied by an outfitter, with the exception of May and July, would then become available to the public in the drawing. Two launches on Sundays and Wednesdays and one launch on all other days of the week would be "set-aside" from the lottery drawing during the months of May and July. Outfitters would have the ability after the lottery drawing to move into "set-aside" launches up to 28 days prior to a specific date in May and July. 28 days prior to a specific date in May and July that was not occupied by an outfitter, the "set-aside" launch would become available to the general public via the reservation phone line.*

Chas VanGenderen, Parks Division Administrator, explained that this proposal is to hold a maximum of 9 launches per week May through July, for launches not already reserved by an outfitter, and allow authorized Smith River outfitters to reschedule their launches no less than 29 days in advance of an available date. Then, within the 28 day period, unscheduled launch dates would become available to the public via the Smith River Reservation System. He recommends adopting the rule as proposed at the November 10 Commission meeting with the following amendments: 1) Include the month of June to hold any occupied outfitter launches from the lottery drawing. 2) Modify language in section VIII, subsection J, to clarify the number of outfitter launches allowed per day. 3) Update Appendix A. Authorized Smith River Commercial Outfitters, to reflect the business sale and transfer of 3 launches of The Complete Fly Fisher to Montana Fly Fishing Connection. This alternative provides outfitters the flexibility to accommodate client needs and changing river conditions. Fifty-two comments were submitted with 47 in support and 4 opposed.

*Action: Moody moved and Colton seconded the motion to adopt the final Smith River State Park & River Corridor Biennial Rule as proposed by the Department, including the above amendments. Motion carried.*

**8. First People's Buffalo Jump Grazing Lease – Final.** Chas VanGenderen, Parks Division Administrator, explained that adjacent to the park is a 320-acre parcel of DNRC property that contains valuable cultural landmarks. The parcel is currently under the grazing and CRP lease #10488. That lease is set to expire February 28, and will then be open to a public competitive bidding process using DNRC protocol. It is proposed that Fish, Wildlife and Parks be assigned as a co-lessee, bringing the parcel under the control of the park. Without FWP holding the lease or being involved in management of the parcel, the cultural resources could be jeopardized. The current lessee would remain and FWP would become a co-lessee. Base rate per AUM in 2012 will be \$7.90, which results in the annual lease payment being \$94.80.

*Action: Moody moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to approve that FWP pursue the Assignment of State Lease 10488 located adjacent to First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park through the State Land Board to include FWP as a co-lessee.*

Bob Gilbert said that under law, DNRC must get maximum return from leases; he questioned if this proposal would be circumventing the intent of the law.

Stafne asked how long this site has been under CRP, and asked when the lease expires.

Kevin Chappell, DNRC, replied that the 10-year CRP contract is four years old, with six years remaining, after which time it will be open for competitive bids, with DNRC ensuing it gets market value. The land is rocky and should not have been broken up to begin with.

*Action on Motion: Motion carried.*

**9. Budget and Legislative Priorities – Proposed.** Sue Daly, FWP Finance Division Administrator, explained that the Executive Planning Process has already begun for the 2013 Legislative Session. Between January and June, the Department will develop legislation and budgets based on priorities, then will come before the Commission in June to request approval of the budget and recommended legislation. Priorities include Agency Management, Financial Management, Habitats, Species of Concern, Recruitment and Retention, Fish and Wildlife Regulation Compliance, Long Range Planning, Public Awareness and Involvement, Data Assessment, Access, Service, Stewardship, Sustainability, and Safety.

*Action: Moody moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to approve the legislative priorities as presented*

Bob Gilbert stated that it is not right that senior citizens think they should be entitled to a discount. FWP is giving away 3 million dollars a year on free programs. This process needs revisited; sometimes these things need to be stopped. He is concerned that there is not enough funding for wolves and grizzly bears. He said he has concerns about “earmarked money” – he said if he pays a license fee for a certain thing, then that’s where he wants that money to go.

Ben Lamb, MWF, said he echoes some of what Bob Gilbert said, but he said it is in conflict with statutes to spend money only on the species someone buys licenses for. He said to reach out to the guys who make a living off of public land and natural resources. Hopefully it is not just hunters and anglers carrying the resources.

Mac Minard, MOGA, said it is not a surprise that there is a revenue shortfall, but it is reversible. He wants to attract non-residents to Montana. He encouraged a broader circle.

*Action on Motion: Motion carried.*

**10. Financial Status of FWP – Informational.** Sue Daly, Finance Division Administrator, and Paul Sihler, Special Programs Manager, presented the information on the Department’s financial status. They narrated a Power Point presentation. They explained that hunting and fishing license sales are down for the second year in a row resulting in a decline in revenue. Nationally, hunting and angling participation is declining as the economy continues to struggle. In Montana, the hard winter impacted deer and antelope numbers; the cold wet spring affected sales of fishing licenses; the price of fuel is high as is the unemployment rate; and there is buyers’ resistance because of the increase in nonresident licenses. Outreach efforts will involve communication with staff, legislators, and constituents, and from this dialogue, alternatives will be developed that could result in any combination of program reductions, redirection of existing revenues, recommendations to change free/discounted licenses, fee increases, or other possibilities.

**11. No Wake Areas at All Commercial Boat Marinas Statewide – Proposed.** Ron Jendro, Enforcement Bureau, explained that Tara Waterson, owner of Fort Peck Marina, contacted FWP requesting that a no-wake zone be established near the marina because increased boating pressure and boats operating at higher speeds on Fort Peck Lake is causing damage to private vessels and docks, as well as making it difficult for people to load and unload their boats. FWP and the Corp of Engineers met with Mrs. Waterson, after which the Corp created a temporary no-wake area under their authority until FWP institutes a no-wake area. With the possibility of additional no-wake areas being requested for other marinas, FWP proposes that all Commercial Marinas have no-wake areas established around them. Marinas have high boat traffic and have many boats docked, so they are all susceptible to accidents and boat damage due to wakes. Currently over half of the commercial marinas have a no-wake restriction and this proposal will make the rules consistent throughout the state. The marinas will need approval from FWP if they would like to establish a no wake zone beyond 300-feet of the marina docks.

*Action: Moody moved and Colton seconded the motion to approve a No-Wake Boating Rule for all commercial marinas as buoyed, and that no commercial marina can establish a no-wake zone beyond 300 feet of the marina docks without prior approval from FWP. Public outreach will be conducted.*

Bob Gilbert said he supports this proposal, but asked to include shoreline erosion as justification.

*Action on Motion: Motion carried.*

**12. Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena Commercial Fishing Regulations – Proposed.** The FWP Commission is authorized statutorily to approve one commercial fishing operation for each body of water and to establish specific regulations regarding gear, limits, seasons, closures and any other limitations deemed necessary. Don Skaar, Fisheries Bureau, explained that this particular application is for a Class B Permit to harvest carp via active seining from Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena, and requires a fee of \$200 plus a \$1,000 Surety Bond. The Commission has approved the commercial fishing regulations for Canyon Ferry and Lake Helena for the past five years. A public comment period will be provided.

*Action: Moody moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to approve the proposed regulations for a commercial fishing operation on Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena for 2012.*

**13. 2012 Helena Urban Deer – Final.**

No recommended changes to the proposal that was approved by the Commission in December, 2011.

*Action: Colton moved and Moody seconded the motion to adopt the proposed 2012 take of up to 220 urban deer by the City of Helena between January 20, 2012 and March 31, 2012 as presented by City staff and FWP.*

Jeanine Brown asked if there were any plans to alter how this process is done. She said we are better than that – we can do better than what we have done. Come up with a better plan.

Moody said better ideas and better approaches would be considered if proposed. This is the lesser of evils presented so far.

Ream said gardens and lawns are being destroyed. Meat goes to the Helena Food Bank so it is beneficial to kill the deer. He strongly supports this method; other options are costly.

*Action on Motion: Motion carried.*

**14. 2012/2013 Peregrine Falconry Take – Proposed.** Quentin Kujala, Wildlife Bureau, presented the proposals. From 2008 through 2011 a total of 42 falconers applied for 18 permits and 5 birds were taken. The proposal is to authorize take of five nestling or fledged peregrines in 2012 and five in 2013 by residents through a quota system, to reduce the quota for take accordingly in 2013 if the quota is exceeded in 2012, to consider any over-harvest during the total two-year take period in the subsequent year's regulations process, to authorize take of one nestling or fledged peregrine in 2012 or 2013 through a nonresident permit system, to regulate nonresident take through the nonresident falconry ARM rule, to regulate nonresident take through a permit system, to restrict take to June 1-August 31, to limit take to one peregrine per year per falconer, to require a successful resident or nonresident falconer who takes a peregrine to wait two years before attempting to take another peregrine, to allow only general and master falconers to take peregrines, to prohibit take from eastern Montana to encourage expansion of the breeding population, to prohibit take from certain nests of high value wildlife viewing opportunity and/or part of on-going agency approved research efforts, and to prohibit the sale, barter or exchange of birds from the wild.

*Action: Moody moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to approve FWP's recommendation to authorize the take of up to 10 peregrine falcons for falconry purposes by residents and one peregrine falcon for falconry purposes by nonresidents during the 2012-2013 take period. Motion carried.*

**15. Turkey Augmentation in Chouteau County – Endorsement.** FWP proposes to trap wild turkeys from populations in Montana where damage complaints arise, and relocate them to riparian habitat along the Missouri River in Chouteau County where there is already an existing population. The nearby Teton and Marias river drainages are contiguous with the Missouri River and birds there are expected to move along the entire corridor once populations are reestablished. FWP will also assist landowners should problems arise. Complete consensus was reached among landowners to allow turkey augmentations in the area and to allow turkey hunting opportunities should a season become established in the future. The local chapters of Pheasants Forever, Wild Turkey Federation, and Safari Club International also support the proposal.

*Action: Moody moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to endorse FWP's recommendation to augment the turkey population in the Missouri River corridor between Fort Benton and Loma. Motion carried.*

**16. 2012 Bighorn Sheep Transplant – Lewis & Clark Caverns – Informational.** Quentin Kujala, Wildlife Bureau, stated that FWP is recommending not to move forward with this proposal at this time due to some neighboring ranchers who have indicated they have no tolerance for the transplant.

Moody stated that he is disturbed that FWP is no longer acting as proposed because of opposition from a few individuals.

Terry Murphy said he owns land in the heart of the proposed area near the Lewis and Clark Caverns. He said he had not heard of this proposal until mid-December when he found that sheep were to cross through his land. He is opposed. It is his land, and it already has too much wildlife on it.

Sandy Carey is opposed to transplanting sheep, and is against bighorn sheep introduction. Forcing sheep onto private land is a disregard by FWP to landowners.

Rachel Kinkie said she is an attorney representing Terry Murphy. She presented a handout with bulleted items as to why they feel the transplant should not happen.

Jim Bailey stated that the bighorn sheep have been suffering for a long time. Sheep are in trouble and we are not doing anything to help them. He spoke about genetics.

Stephany Sea said she agrees with Jim Bailey, and added that she feels the cattle industry is selfish.

Vermillion stated that FWP has been working hard to live up to the management plan in working with different groups of people. The Department has done a good job of publicizing this transplant. The agency is not negligent in reaching out to the public. The only way the sheep plan will work is for landowners, sportsmen, and the Department to work together. FWP has struck out on all sheep locations – if this continues, how do we go forward? If the sheep plan doesn't work we need to find out why. This move not to support this translocation moves to public conversation to talk more about where the sheep can go. They are getting diseased and we need to spread them out. We have to figure this out – it's not working for anyone or for the sheep.

**17. Wolf Management Harvest – Proposed.** The Commission previously adopted a statewide quota of 220 and created an additional WMU (250) in the Bitterroot Valley for the 2011 season, and then the Commission extended the wolf hunting season through February 15, 2012. Now, this proposal is to further extend the season through April 1, 2012, or until the quota of 18 wolves is met, whichever happens first, and also removes the hunter orange requirement in WMU 250. Public comment will extend through February 13, 2012.

*Action: Stafne moved and Colton seconded the motion to allow management harvest of wolves by hunters in WMU 250 through April 1, 2012.*

Ream said he sees several problems with this extension. If it is extended here, it will be questioned why it is not done in other WMUs where the numbers are below the quota. The breeding season begins in mid-February. 147 wolves have already been harvested, and the season has already been extended once to February 15. He recommended not extending the season again. Changing the rules during a scientific study fouls up the study. It has been learned that during calving season last spring, 66 elk calf mortalities were by lions and by bears. Few were taken by wolves.

Colton said he has reservations about this proposed extension. Extending the season is not the approach to take.

Vermillion said a conversation with a Bitterroot biologist indicated to him that they are working hard to figure out how to turn the populations of elk and deer around. If the season in WMU250 is extended, it will be expected in other WMUs. He is uncomfortable with this shift.

Moody stated that he will not support the motion. Although he did not like it at the time, he did vote approval of the use of recreational hunters to kill wolves, but it is outside of fair chase hunting. This proposal to extend the season is going too far. The sportsmans' code is to not shoot animals during their reproductive season, and here we are proposing to do just that. People are forgetting that there are boundaries when they say they are ethical fair chase hunters. There is a limit to the recreational management tool.

Stephanie Seay opposes wolf hunting in general. She appreciated what Commissioner Moody had to say. Elk numbers are down for several reasons, such as the hard winter last year, and the rapid population growth in the Bitterroot. Wolves move around, so elk move around. Elk will run into a herd of bison and wolves won't move into that herd. If a dog looks somewhat like a wolf, as does hers, she fears they may be shot by hunters.

Mac Minard said as we grow into wolf management, we will be looking at the sporting level and at the control level.

Paul Westphal supports this proposal.

Mark (unidentified last name), speaking from the Missoula FWP office, opposes the wolf hunt going past February. It is contradictory to propose it when the biologist is against it. It is unethical to kill pregnant wolves.

Janice Stroud said the huge increase in the use of off-highway vehicles is driving the elk down and the wolf gets the blame. OHVs are a part of the problem.

Steve Wilson said people have to get over the heartfelt feeling of shooting pregnant animals.

Keith (unidentified last name) said the Commission needs to get rid of predators in the west fork.

Brian Bidlake said other species need help.

*Action on Motion: Motion carried. (Ream and Moody opposed).*

*Action: Ream moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to concurrently increase the mountain lion quota in district 250 from 20 to 30 and the female subquota from 3 to 5. Motion carried.*

**18. Bison Management Harvest – Proposed.** Director Maurier stated that FWP has been working hard to find tolerance for bison. The bison that roam are not tested so the line has been moved. Their area has been enlarged by 75,000 acres, but now there is a need to manage them past that line. Discussions are underway. FWP is proposing a process to use licensed hunters, or hunters selected from a randomized list, to lethally remove bison outside defined tolerance areas. Bison removed by hunters in this way would be identified as “bison management harvests.” This is intended to complement existing management efforts that include hazing and lethal removal.

*Action: Vermillion moved and Colton seconded the motion to approve the use of hunters for bison management harvests as presented by FWP.*

Moody stated that he is not pleased with the IBMP. Using licensed hunters as “vermon control tools” to control bison who stroll over an invisible line of containment is not a fair chase hunt. Extend the season if you want to remove bison. Use something other than hunters – use helicopters or wildlife services. It makes a difference as to whether it is fair chase hunting. Maybe there is a third way out of this situation.

Stephany Seay, Buffalo Field Campaign, stated that they oppose this proposal. They find it disturbing that FWP is killing more and more buffalo rather than considering them as a wildlife species. “You cannot just keep confining and killing wildlife because it is a minor inconvenience to a few people. Bison need habitat – they have been confined for a very long time.” The current hunt is not fair chase - they cross a line in the sand and then they get killed on a firing line. The problem isn’t the wildlife, it’s the humans, but wildlife bears the burden. Look at a human management plan.

Ben Lamb said MWF hasn’t taken a position yet. Bison are iconic animals and whatever is done takes on the image of the hunting public. These are a species unlike any other. Keep an open mind. Call it a game damage hunt.

Pat Flowers, FWP Region 3 Supervisor, said they felt it would be valuable to allow hunters to take them rather than FWP or Department of Livestock (DOL) personnel. Some of it could be fair chase. DOL could take these animals in any manner at this point. It has happened that DOL has shot them and removed them.

*Action on Motion: Motion carried. (Ream opposed).*

**19. Update on Season Settings – Informational.** Quentin Kujala, FWP Wildlife Bureau, explained to the Commission that many public comments will be received. He said the wildlife populations are declining.

Hank Worsech, License Bureau Chief, noted that the new March 15 deadline has created a situation for youth who are taking hunter education, as they cannot purchase a license until after March 15.

*Action: Moody moved and Colton seconded the motion to approve a tentative regulation change to create a new eligibility for drawing an either sex elk or deer permit in hunting districts in which these permits are required but offered as unlimited. This eligibility will be limited to new hunter education graduates and people who receive their general license after the regular drawing is over. Motion carried.*

## **20. Open Microphone.**

Brian Bidlake said he did not feel that due process was used when boating regulations for R2 rivers were set. He said there were numerous violations to river recreation management rules. He does not feel it should be closed to motorized users.

Mac Minard said the MOGA convention went very well, with a lot of participation. He provided the Commissioners with a white paper on Region 1 Mountain Lion management.

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Action: Moody moved and Colton seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Dan Vermillion, Vice-Chairman

Joe Maurier, Director